

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 8-13, 15-16, and 21-23 are pending.

Claim 8 has been amended.

Claims 1-7, 14, and 17-20 have been cancelled.

Support for the amendments is found in the claims and specification (claim 14 and page 13, ln. 8-21), as originally filed.

No new matter is believed to have been added.

Claims 8-16, and 21-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over Campbell et al., US 2002/00912507. The rejection is traversed because Campbell et al. do not describe or suggest pre-heating a material mixture prior to continuously feeding the mixture to a first reactor.

The claimed method for producing a vinyl-base polymer comprises first, continuously feeding a material mixture to a continuous tank first reactor and, second, feeding a polymerization initiator to a second reactor, wherein the material mixture is continuously fed to the first reactor after preheating.

A large amount of heat is necessary at first to maintain a required value of the polymerization temperature and the retention time in the first reactor. When the retention time in the first reactor is short, the amount of heat to be supplied is not be sufficient to reach the desired temperature.

The present specification describes on page 13, lines 8 to 21:

The material mixture containing the vinyl-based monomer can be preheated before feeding to the first reactor. When the material mixture is preheated before feeding to the first reactor, even if heating (heat supplied) from the exterior of the reactor such as jacket heating or internal coil heating is insufficient because of a short retention time in the first reactor, the temperature in the first reactor can be easily controlled to a desired polymerization temperature by sensible heat due to heat generated by the polymerization of the monomer and heat due to preheating. When the feeding temperature of the material mixture is too

low, the amount of heat is insufficient unless preheating is conducted and it may become difficult to control the polymerization temperature. The preheating temperature of the material mixture is preferably 120°C or lower.

When the preheating temperature is 120°C or lower, the polymerization of the vinyl-based monomer during preheating can be suppressed. When the material mixture contains the polymerization initiator, the decomposition of the polymerization initiator can be suppressed.

Thus, "preheating" is very important for controlling a temperature in the first reactor of the claimed method.

Campbell et al. do not disclose or suggest "preheating" a material mixture prior to continuously feeding the mixture to a first reactor. Thus, Campbell et al. do not anticipate the claimed method.

In addition, Campbell et al. do not make the claimed method obvious because Campbell et al. do not suggest preheating and the claimed method provides an advantageous result as described on page 13, lines 8 to 21 and Example 9.

Thus, Campbell et al. do not anticipate or make the claimed method obvious.

Applicants request that the rejection be withdrawn.

A Notice of Allowance for all pending claims is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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